

Office of the SWIC Newsletter



Message from John T. Stevens, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) & Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for FirstNet in NH



In the Wake of COVID Much Has Been Accomplished

Certainly the past two years have been unprecedented based upon the enormity of the pandemic and what agencies dedicated to public safety had to endure. Faced with insurmountable odds in a continuous COVID environment, public safety officials have adopted new and ever changing protocols when providing service to the public that they've been sworn to protect. Staffing shortages, critical and often adverse viewpoints of public safety officials and maintaining a sense of peace and order were competing on the national landscape, yet in New Hampshire, public

safety has stayed the course as New Hampshire residents and our visitors enjoy the quality of life that New Hampshire has to offer.

This can only be accomplished through the dedicated efforts of public safety organizations throughout the state and the support functions that aid them in their delivery. Pertinent to that delivery is the communications landscape that without consistent and viable avenues of communications, public safety could not perform their missions. These dedicated individuals from those who provide the voice of communications, to those who service the radios and climb the towers and are the technicians of the network, conduct their responsibilities knowing full well that lives can be saved through their commitment to public safety. From the 9-1-1 Call Taker, to the Police, Fire, and EMS Dispatcher, to the technicians who maintain and enhance communications throughout New Hampshire, we recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate all that you do to keep New Hampshire one of the most desirable states to live and raise a family.

The SWIC's Office represents this commitment and works diligently to support Public Safety Communications throughout the state, placing critical importance on interoperability. Whether through training and exercises, maintaining the direction and cohesiveness of the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and its Working Groups, enhancing the Mutualink Network, working closely with FirstNet/AT&T to develop and improve the infrastructure that supports FirstNet, being a significant partner with the R2 Network, membership with both NCSWIC and SAFECOM, or meeting with individual public safety committees, or organizations throughout the state, the SWIC's Office will always be approachable and open to heightening the prospects of interoperable communications.

Pertinent to this agenda has been the development of a very aggressive posture in 2021 to make-up for what was unfortunately lost in 2020 during the height of the pandemic. Certainly, gratitude and appreciation has to be offered to the US Department of Homeland Security, Cyber Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) for assisting the State of New Hampshire in providing Technical Assistance (TA) Programs that assisted us in offering these training and exercise programs. In July we conducted the Communication Technicians (COMT) Training Class.

In August, through our combined efforts, the ICS300 Class was offered through NHHSEM and the Fire Academy. In September we offered the Communications Leader (COML) Training Class and in October we presented the Communications Unit (COMU) Exercise, which also provided New Hampshire the opportunity with a Train-the-Trainer opportunity for our seasoned specialists.

Combined with this initiative was a Technical Assistance Program that provided “Drive Testing,” analyzing AT&T coverage, connectivity and infrastructure in Cheshire, Sullivan, and Grafton counties. FirstNet/AT&T has had tremendous growth in New Hampshire, but our needs still and will continue as we monitor the growth of the network specifically now in these three counties.

As we enter the fall period with changing and falling leaves and knowing that the holiday season will soon be upon us, we are reminded every day of the toll that this pandemic has placed on all of us. Please remain cognizant of your surroundings and take whatever precautions necessary to maintain your health and safety. Your health and safety is paramount and as we get back to what we have always considered to be normal, let us take a moment and recognize those who continued to serve the public, often in competing harms and at great hardship, but continued and maintained a level of professional service that kept New Hampshire one of the safest states in the country.

To you, we offer our sincere gratitude and appreciation,
John T. Stevens

Highlights from our CISA TA Programs



FirstNet buildout more than 95% complete, AT&T exec says

Written by Donny Jackson

AT&T has completed more than 95% of its contracted buildout of the FirstNet nationwide public-safety broadband network (NPSBN) system on 700 MHz Band 14 spectrum, according to an AT&T executive. Scott Agnew, AT&T's assistant vice president for FirstNet products, provided the update during his keynote address last Thursday during the IWCE 2021 event in Las Vegas. Named by the FirstNet Authority in March 2017 as the contract partner to build the NPSBN, AT&T was required to build the LTE network on the Band 14 airwaves licensed to the FirstNet Authority, but the carrier giant opted to expand its offering. AT&T is "over 95% complete with our Band 14 deployment," Agnew said during his keynote, specifically addressing the public safety community. "It's dedicated to public safety; this is your dedicated spectrum. However, our strategy is an all-band strategy. So, not only do we deploy on your spectrum and continue to expand that network daily, but we also give you access to all of AT&T's spectrum, [where] you have priority and preemption."

For AT&T, completing 95% of the contracted Band 14 buildout has contractual significance, as it means that the carrier has met the second-to-last coverage threshold included in the agreement with the FirstNet Authority at least six months ahead of schedule. Meeting such buildout milestones is a key component to AT&T potentially earning about \$1 billion under the contract.

With the FirstNet Authority issuing the initial network-buildout task order to AT&T in March 2018, the carrier has until March 2023 to complete the Band 14 deployment, as well as develop other service capabilities within the system. AT&T officials have expressed confidence that the company will meet the March 2023 deadline, but they have acknowledged that the remaining buildout includes some of the most challenging locations for deploying cell sites and the requisite backhaul.

This Band 14 buildout is the highest-profile aspect of the FirstNet contract, but the agreement with AT&T extends into 2042, with the FirstNet Authority having the ability to reinvest an estimated \$15 billion in the public-safety broadband system during the life of the 25-year deal.

In addition to providing broadband connectivity to public safety, FirstNet has driven innovation in numerous areas, from the development of 3GPP mission-critical products and certified public-safety applications to the realization of longtime visions surrounding Z-axis location, high-power user equipment (HPUE) and a versatile portfolio of deployable options, Agnew said. FirstNet subscribers can expect more innovative offerings in the future, he said. "I want to promise you, as the product owner of FirstNet, that we are not done," Agnew said. "There's much more innovation to come. There is much more innovation that you can count on. And this innovation has been quite successful, if you think [about the fact] that the FirstNet core—the dedicated [LTE] core exclusive to public safety—was deployed in March of 2018. It is roughly little over three years old ... and a big part of that has been [time impaired by] COVID."

Despite these trying circumstances, Agnew noted public safety's adoption of FirstNet, reiterating that the NPSBN supports more than 2.5 million connections for more than 17,000 agencies. These figures are an indication that public-safety users are embracing FirstNet as "their network," he said.

<https://urgentcomm.com/2021/10/05/irstnet-buildout-more-than-95-complete-att-exec-says/>

Have a news story you'd like us to feature? Drop us a line.

NHSWIC@dos.nh.gov | www.nh.gov/firstnet



@NHInterop



facebook.com/nhinterop



linkedin.com/company/nhinterop

